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Message Text

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15
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SSM-03 SAB-01 OMB-01 DHA-02 ORM-02 AID-05 /084 W
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R 300724Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2471
INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, SOCI, IS
SUBJECT: ARAB SQUATTING AND ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION

BEGIN SUMMARY: ALLEGATIONS OF ARAB SQUATTING ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION, RECENTLY REPORTED IN THE PRESS, HAVE BEEN LINKED TO THE QADOUM ISSUE IN EFFORT TO EMBARRASS RABIN GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH SOME COLUMNISTS HAVE SUGGESTED A COORDINATED ARAB CAMPAIGN FINANCED FROM ABROAD TO COUNTER JEWISH SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY, GOVERNMENT MINISTERS HAVE DISCOUNTED ANY POLITICAL MOTIVE BEHIND THE ILLEGAL ACTIVITY. EVEN THE NRP MK WHO RAISED THE ISSUE IN THE KNESSET DISMISSED SPECULATION OF FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT. WHILE WIDE-SPREAD UNLICENSED CONSTRUCTION IS NOT A MONOPOLY OF THE ARABS IN ISRAEL, CALLING ATTENTION TO THIS ACTIVITY AT THIS TIME APPEARS TO BE A PRESSURE TACTIC TO INFLUENCE RABIN'S DECISION ON QADOUM SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY

1. NUMEROUS ARTICLES AND COMMENTARY HAVE RECENTLY APPEARED IN THE ISRAELI PRESS ON THE SUBJECT OF "ILLEGAL" ARAB SETTLEMENTS. THESE REPORTS ALLEGE THAT ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION AND SQUATTING ON STATE OWNED LAND BY ARABS, OFTEN BEDOUIN, HAS BEEN WIDE-SPREAD FOR YEARS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE GREEN LINE. FIGURES GIVEN RANGE FROM 8,000 TO 10,000 AS THE NUMBER OF
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STRUCTURES ERECTED BY ARABS WITHOUT BUILDING PERMITS.

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2. PREDICTABLY, THE ISSUE HAS BEEN LINKED TO THE QADOUM QUESTION IN EFFORT TO EMBARRASS THE RABIN GOVERNMENT. CRITICISM, IMPLIED OR STATED, IS DIRECTED AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT FOR HAVING DONE NOTHEING TO STOP ARAB VIOLATIONS OF ISRAELI BUILDING CODES AND ENCROACHMENT ON PUBLIC LAND WHILE MAKING A MAJOR ISSUE OF THE ONE INSTANCE OF UNAUTHORIZED JEWISH SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY ON THE WEST BANK. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT ILLEGAL BUILDING AND SQUATTING BY ARABS ARE COORDINATED AND DESIGNED TO COUNTER JEWISH SETTLEMENT. MORE THAN ONE COLUMNIST HAS SUGGESTED OUTSIDE FINANCING OF THIS ACTIVITY, PROBABLY ORIGINATING IN LIBYA.

3. DAVAR (TADMOR) PUT THE ISSUE IN MORE REASONED PERSPECTIVE WHEN ON JULY 23 IT STATED THAT ALTHOUGH SOME ARAB BUILDING MAY BE DESIGNED TO CONTAIN EXPANSION OF JEWISH SETTLEMENT NEAR HEBRON (KIRYAT ARBA) AND EAST JERUSALEM, THE PROBLEM COULD BE MAINLY "A MATTER OF POPULATION DRIFT TO AREAS WHERE THERE IS AMPLE EMPLOYMENT." DAVAR BELIEVES THE UNLICENSED BUILDING IS ALSO A REFLECTION OF SOCIOLOGICAL CHANGE, WITH YOUG ARAB FAMILIES EAGER TO ESCAPE FROM THE PATRIARCHAL CLAN SYSTEM BUT FINDING IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN BUILDING PERMITS. THEY RESORT TO PUTTING UP A ROOF AND FOUR WALLS OVERNIGHT, WHICH AUTHORITIES THEN FIND DIFFICULT TO UNDO.

4. ON JULY 21 MK YEHUDA BEN-MEIR, A LEADER OF THE HARDLINE YOUTH FACTION OF THE NRP, RAISED THE ISSUE IN THE KNESSET AND ASKED WHAT WAS BEING DONE TO STOP THIS ACTIVITY BY ARABS IN ISRAEL AND IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. REPLYING FOR THE GOVERNMENT, INTERIOR MINISTER BURG (NRP) SAW THE ISSUE AS PRIMARILY ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION AND PLACED MOST OF THE BLAME ON THE LACK OF PROPER TOWN PLANNING IN MANY ARAB LOCALITIES. ADDRESSING TECHNION STUDENTS ON JULY 28, HOUSING MINISTER OFER (LABOR) SAID HE SAW NO EVIDENCE OF "DELIBERATE ARAB SETTLEMENT OF ISRAEL THROUGH ILLEGAL BUILDING TO CREATE POLITICAL FACTS."

5. IN A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBOFF, BEN-MEIR DENIED THAT HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PARLIAMENTARY INTERROGATORY WAS CONNECTED WITH QADOUM ISSUE, AND DISMISSED AS WITHOUT FOUNDATION SPECULATION THAT QADHAFI OR ANY OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENT WAS BEHIND THE ACTIVITY. (THE PRIME MINISTER'S ARAB AFFAIRS ADVISOR TOLEDANO HAD ALSO PUBLICLY DENIED SUGGESTIONS THAT THE ACTIVITY IS BEING FINANCED BY ELEMENTS OUTSIDE ISRAEL.) BEN-MEIR CLAIMED THAT ARAB ILLEGAL LAND ACTIVITY HAS BEEN UNDERWAY FOR YEARS AND IS NOT USUALLY DELIBERATE FLOUTING OF THE LAWS, BUT THAT IT

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NONETHELESS SHOULD BE STOPPED.

6. BEGIN COMMENT: UNLICENSED BUILDING BY JEWS IS ALSO BELIEVED TO BE COMMON, IF NOT AS CONSPICUOUS AS AMONG ARABS, IN A SOCIETY OFTEN FRUSTRATED BY ITS UBIQUITOUS BUREAUCRACY. IN MAY POLICE WERE CALLED IN WHEN JEWISH RESIDENTS OF TEL AVIV'S POO HATIKVAH QUARTER RESISTED MUNICIPAL DEMANDS TO REMOVE NUMEROUS UNLICENSED STRUCTURES AND ADDITIONS TO EXISTING HOUSING.

7. DESPITE THE DISCLAIMER, BEN-MEIR'S FORMAL RAISING OF THE ISSUE AT THIS TIME SEEMS AIMED AT PRESSURING RABIN AS GURTHER POSTPONEMENT OF A DECISION ON QADOUM BECOMES INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT. BEN-MEIR'S FACTION IN THE NRP, STROUGLY INFLUENCED BY ITS GUSH EMUNIM ELEMENT, IS EXPECTED TO QUIT THE COALITION SHOULD RABIN DECIDE TO FORCIBLY EVICE THE QADOUM SETTLERS. ALTHOUGH BOTH ARE MEMBERS OF THE NRP, BEN-MEIR WOULD HAVE NO COMPUNCTION ABOUT EMBARRASSING BURG, WHO HEADS A MODERATE RIVAL FACTION IN THE NRP. END COMMENT
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